

In addition, I heard from the other side of the aisle some comments about how difficult it was to meet the caps, how difficult it was not to take any money from Social Security, as if it were a Republican problem. One Senator—I will not use names, but the Senator who mentioned that was a Senator who came to the floor and asked for \$8 billion on an emergency basis for the farm problem in America.

If my colleagues are wondering how come we have a difficult time, it is because somebody comes down and adds \$8 billion that we did not expect to spend and we have to accommodate in some way so we do not use Social Security money, and that does not make it any easier.

I am not objecting to that. It will probably come out of the Senate and House before long at \$7 billion, \$7.5 billion, and an overwhelming number of House Members and Senators will think it is right. I am suggesting it is not always those who are trying to manage things on the majority side who cause the problems that make it difficult to get things done.

I do not choose to go beyond that. The President submitted a budget to us that was totally in error of the budget caps. It used Social Security money. And then we are criticized because we are having a difficult time dealing with it. The President had new taxes he added and then spent them in his bill. We have chosen to have a policy of no new taxes to meet our appropriations bills.

There are a number of things the President did that we cannot do. Here is one: The President is talking about Medicare, saying we ought to reform it before we have a tax cut for the American people. The President had \$27 billion of cuts in Medicare in his budget. He did not tell us about that. We told you about that. It is long forgotten. In fact, the number may be higher. It may be 35. Anyway, it is 27 or more.

We had to pay for that in our budget; it was not the right thing to do. The President might have thought so, but nobody in the Congress did. It has not been easy.

Nonetheless, we are going to have a pretty good year. We are going to have a pretty good year because when we are finished, we will have dramatically increased defense, and part of it will be an emergency because that is what it is. We will get all the appeals done and some of the advance funding that is legitimate and right.

The President had \$21 billion in advance funding, and now there are people on the other side wondering what that is, as if we invented it. It has been around for a long time. In fact, there is \$11 billion of it in the budget we are living with right now, which means nothing more than, you account for the money in the year in which you spend it rather than the year in which you appropriate it. We will have some of that, too—maybe as much as the President had; I don't know. But how are we

going to meet these targets if we are not permitted to do that, when the President is challenging us that we are not doing what he wanted us to do—that is his big challenge. How can we do that?

I yield the floor.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR FUNDING

Mr. NICKLES. I would to address a question to my friend from New Mexico, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. This continuing resolution essentially funds government programs and operations at fiscal year 1999 levels under the authority and conditions provided in the applicable appropriations Act for fiscal year 1999. Since Congress has not yet completed its work on the fiscal year 2000 Interior and Related Agencies appropriations bill, I would conclude that Department of Interior agencies, programs and activities will be funded under this resolution at fiscal year 1999 levels under the policies and restrictions in effect during fiscal year 1999.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for his question. I too believe that this resolution will allow Interior Department funding to be continued at fiscal year 1999 levels in accordance with fiscal year 1999 policies through October 21, 1999.

Mr. NICKLES. I thank the Chairman.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on H.J. Res. 68.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution is before the Senate and open to amendment. If there be no amendment to be proposed, the question is on the third reading of the joint resolution.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, shall it pass? The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant called the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 296 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Abraham	Chafee	Feinstein
Akaka	Cleland	Fitzgerald
Allard	Cochran	Frist
Baucus	Collins	Gorton
Bayh	Conrad	Graham
Bennett	Coverdell	Gramm
Biden	Craig	Grams
Bingaman	Crapo	Grassley
Bond	Daschle	Gregg
Boxer	DeWine	Hagel
Breaux	Dodd	Harkin
Brownback	Domenici	Hatch
Bryan	Dorgan	Helms
Bunning	Durbin	Hollings
Burns	Edwards	Hutchinson
Byrd	Enzi	Hutchinson
Campbell	Feingold	Inhofe

Inouye	Mack	Sessions
Jeffords	McConnell	Shelby
Johnson	Mikulski	Smith (NH)
Kennedy	Moynihan	Smith (OR)
Kerrey	Murkowski	Snowe
Kerry	Murray	Specter
Kohl	Nickles	Stevens
Kyl	Reed	Thomas
Landrieu	Reid	Thompson
Lautenberg	Robb	Thurmond
Leahy	Roberts	Torricelli
Levin	Rockefeller	Voinovich
Lieberman	Roth	Warner
Lincoln	Santorum	Wellstone
Lott	Sarbanes	Wyden
Lugar	Schumer	

NAYS—1

Ashcroft

NOT VOTING—1

McCain

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 68) was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 761

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader, after consultation with the Democratic leader, may proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 243, S. 761, under the following limitations: There be 1 hour for debate equally divided in the usual form and the only amendment in order to the bill be a managers' substitute amendment to be offered by Senators ABRAHAM and LEAHY. I further ask consent that following the use or yielding back of time and the disposition of the substitute amendment, the committee substitute be agreed to, as amended, the bill be read a third time, and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of S. 761, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I ask my colleague from Michigan whether or not this unanimous consent request can be modified to include other amendments; for example, some amendments that deal with how we improve farm policy or amendments on minimum wage?

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, at this time I cannot agree to such a modification.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, if that is the case, as I explained to the majority leader earlier, I am determined that I am going to have an opportunity as a Senator from Minnesota to come out here on the floor of the Senate and to fight for farmers who are losing their farms in my State, and therefore I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, if I may comment, I certainly appreciate Senators will differ on issues, and I have talked with the Senator from Minnesota. I understand his feelings on the issue he would like to include, either in the context of legislation I am talking about tonight or in some other context. But I point out for the benefit of all of our colleagues that the legislation that was the subject of this unanimous consent proposal, S. 761, is a very important piece of legislation but not one I believe should become tied up in a variety of nongermane amendments and debate.

The bill that would have been proposed, S. 761, is essentially a bill which would seek to make it feasible for us to engage in electronic commercial activities and to provide validity to what we call digital signatures or the authentication of digital signatures to allow for the expansion and continuing development of commercial activities over the Internet.

This legislation is needed, and it is my understanding, in efforts to secure unanimous consent to go to this, we have found as many as 99 Members in support of this bill. That is not surprising. The States are in desperate hope we will pass this legislation and pass it soon.

I left the Senate Commerce Committee, as the Presiding Officer knows, being a member of the committee, with unanimous support on a bipartisan basis. I have been pleased to offer this legislation, along with my colleague, Senator WYDEN of Oregon, and a number of cosponsors.

It was basically to this point uncontroversial. We have worked closely with Senator LEAHY to come forward with a substitute which we are prepared ultimately to offer that I think addresses some concerns that had been expressed.

The administration has expressed its support for the legislation as well. So I hope that we can, if not in the context of today, then at a point very soon, find some manner or means to pass the legislation and move it forward.

Every day, the expansion of those who have access to the Internet is increasing. Every day, the activities of a commercial sort that go on through the Internet are increasing. What the people who are engaging in those commercial activities need is a certainty that their contracts over the Internet will be, in fact, authenticated and given full faith and credit. The absence of this legislation makes that issue somewhat in doubt.

So while 42 States, I believe, have now passed their own digital signature laws, no 2 of these are alike. States are working hard at this time to come up with a uniform system and, in fact, a uniform code for digital signatures, and authentication has been developed but it has not yet been passed.

In the interim, until that happens, in my judgment, we need to have a sys-

tem in place. This legislation would provide it. It is strongly backed by the high-tech industries of our country. I know they will be contacting Members in the hope that we can move this forward because there are so many, as I have said already, increases in the use of the Internet for commercial activity going on every single day.

So I deeply regret we could not move to this legislation tonight. I hope that as Senators with other agenda items consider ways to bring their items to the floor, they will find germane, as opposed to nongermane, vehicles to which to offer their amendments, or at least, at a minimum, they will not seek to stall this legislation any further.

I think it is an important bill. I do not think it is controversial. But I think every day we go without its passage, we will create the potential for greater problems in regard to the expansion of commercial activity that takes place in this country through the Internet and through electronic means.

So, Mr. President, I yield the floor. Hopefully, at a date very soon, I will be back so we can successfully move forward on this legislation.

Mr. ASHCROFT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. ASHCROFT. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak for up to 30 minutes regarding the agricultural embargo issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE UNILATERAL EMBARGO ON AGRICULTURAL AND MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, as I think everyone in this Chamber understands, I am advocating that there be sanctions reform with regard to the unilateral embargo imposed by this country on agricultural and medicinal products as it relates to sales in other settings.

I say "unilateral embargo." This means that the United States alone decides to deprive people in the United States of the right to sell to some other country. So it is not when we are involved in multilateral embargoes but unilateral embargoes.

Secondly, the kind of embargo we are talking about is an embargo of medicine or agriculture. We are talking about the kind of thing that will keep people from starving or keep people who are in need of medicine from dying.

Senators HAGEL, BAUCUS, DODD, KERREY, BROWBACK, and a host of others have joined with me in working on a bill that would lift embargoes of this kind against U.S. farm products.

In a sense, the bottom line is this: We offered our embargo proposal as an amendment to the agricultural appropriations bill. That is a bill that is supposed to serve the interests of farmers. The result? I have to say that the result in the Senate was a heartwarming and commendable result.

Senators, understanding that we ought to improve the capacity of our farmers to market their products around the world, and to keep farmers from being used as pawns in diplomatic disputes through the imposition of unilateral agricultural and medicinal embargoes, considered the proposal, debated the proposal, and overwhelmingly concluded, in a vote of 70-28, that we should stop using our farmers as pawns in the world of international diplomacy. Also, the Senate conferees agreed, with a vote of 8-3. Furthermore, we had the agreement of House conferees.

So what went wrong in the conference committee, after the Senate made a part of its agricultural appropriations bill a reform in this way, where farmers have been deprived of their right to market food and medicine—and pharmaceuticals are also marketed—what happened? What happened to us?

The reason I am down here today is to talk about that. If there is such overwhelming support in the Congress for such reform, what happened to the Democratic process here?

A few Members of the House and Senate leadership decided that they did not agree, and they basically vetoed something that was passed by the Senate—expressed by those who represent the people as the will of the people.

Most of the time, in order to veto the Senate, you have to be elected President. But apparently sometimes you are going to be able to overrule a 70-28 vote in the Senate by just saying that your own position is more noteworthy than that of a virtually overwhelming majority of the Senate. They vetoed the Senate-passed provision and inserted their own policy into the agricultural appropriations bill.

I am on the floor now to let farmers and ranchers across America know exactly what happened.

First of all, I would like to explain to America's farmers—and particularly to those in Missouri and the Midwest—how I fought for their interests but was prevented from doing what they wanted because of a small minority—from the leadership—who worked against sanctions reform.

Second, I would like to explain what my colleagues were proposing in the amendment with me, what was the nature of this reform.

And then third, I would like to show how it is good public policy to have a reform in sanctions not only to help farmers and ranchers but also how it is good foreign policy.

Here are the events of the House-Senate conference committee.

Let me be perfectly clear. The Senate voted on agricultural embargoes. This was not something that was interjected in the committee. We agreed, with a 70-28 vote, to end the embargo on farmers. After I and the other sponsors of the amendment made additional concessions to those opposing sanctions reform, the amendment was passed by